

REMARKS

Concerning the Office Action, applicants note the Examiner's rejection of Claims 1-24 under 35 U.S. C. §103(a), as being unpatentable over Goldstein, U.S. Patent No. 6,448,571 in view of Sisson, Jr., U.S. Patent No. 5,012,114, as detailed paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Office Action.

However, upon careful consideration of the art, and in comparison thereof with the current invention, as set forth in the claims, applicant respectfully takes issue with the Examiner's position that these prior art publications render the claims, as presently pending on file, unpatentable or obvious to one of skill in this particular technology.

Concerning the primary reference of record, Goldstein, U.S. Patent No. 6,448,571, applicant notes that the radiation protective arrangement disclosed in this publication is merely directed towards encasing the patient with a flexible covering structure, particularly such as plastic wrapped lead plates, in order to inhibit any radiation from escaping from the patient to the exterior, except for accessibility to the patient by means of small apertures formed in the protective casing, and which are utilized to impart radiation to sites on the patient, as part of the medical treatment. This has absolutely nothing in common with the type of protective arrangement, as provided for by the present invention in which pluralities of essentially overlapping plate elements are encased in removable and replaceable covers of preferably varying lengths so as to be adapted to different types of positions of treating personnel, such as a physician or medical technician, and which will allow for removal and sterilization of the external covers during medical or surgical procedures, while still enabling further covers to be replaced on the lead plates in order to protect the physician or medical technician. This particular structure does not encase the patient, but rather leaves the latter free to be operated on or treated over major portions of the body surface, while concurrently fully protecting the

medical or surgical personnel and the surroundings. Consequently, the claims, as presently pending, are deemed to clearly and patentably distinguish over Goldstein, which is concerned with a completely different type of arrangement for protecting medical personnel from radiation.

Concerning the Sisson, Jr. U.S. publication, applicant notes that the patent discloses a screening element which separately includes a radiation shielding material that is matched thereto and which surrounds the screening element so that the two elements or sheets are fastened together, and are yet still completely separate from each other, but are held together by means of releasable fasteners, such as hook and loop type fasteners or Velcro fasteners.

With regard to the releasable fasteners, as mentioned in Sisson, Jr. at Column 4, lines 30-54, and identified by elements 26a and 26b in Figure 1, these are not for retaining the radiation shielding material and the cover together, but it is clear from the disclosure of Sisson, Jr. that the releasable fasteners, which are implemented by Velcro strips, are only attached to a first facing sheet 14 in order to provide a wrappable sheet, which can be placed and wrapped around the conduit 30.

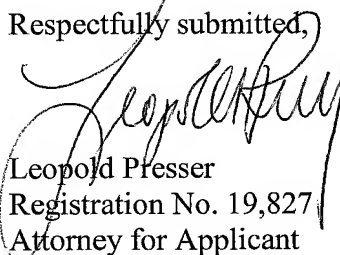
In Sisson, Jr., there is no mention that the core sheet 16, which represents the radiation shielding material and the facing sheets 14 and 18, which correspond to the cover, are separable. To the contrary, as described in Column 3, lines 51-63, the three sheets 14, 16 and 18 are permanently joined together by suitable adhesive, by a mechanical fasteners, and the edges of the composite wrappable sheets are sealed by ultrasonic welding or by the application of a sealing closure strip, which is attached about the periphery thereof by means of an adhesive, ultrasonic welding, or other suitable permanent fastening means. In an alternative embodiment of Sisson, Jr., the facing sheets 14 and 18 form a sleeve-like or a bag-like structure into which the core sheet may be inserted, however, in that instance, the open edge of the bag or sleeve is sealed afterwards in order to provide a composite permanently sealed structure.

Consequently, in Sisson, Jr., after the sealing of the composite structure, it is no longer possible to implement any separation between the shielding material and the cover, completely unlike the present invention, in which the cover may be removed and replaced in order to provide sterilizable features or capabilities and also for different lengths of covers.

Neither Goldstein nor Sisson, Jr., considered singly or in combination, disclose the concept of providing a cover which can be pulled over the screening element and completely separated therefrom when required and replaced by further covers, as necessary in particular situations.

In view of the foregoing, the independent claims, as presently on file, and also the claims which are dependent therefrom, are clearly and patentably distinct over the prior art of record, and the early and favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application by the Examiner is earnestly solicited. However, in the event that the Examiner has any queries concerning the instantly submitted Amendment, applicant's attorney respectfully requests that he be accorded the courtesy of possibly a telephone conference to discuss any matters in need of attention.

Respectfully submitted,


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